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Darynka's Staircase

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"*There is a pristine, carpeted staircase sitting in the middle of the oldest part of Brokilon. No house. No ruins. Just stairs. If you value your soul, do not look at it, do not speak to it, and by the Gods, do not let your boots touch the first step.*"
—Anonymous Verdenian Peasant (circa, 1250s)

Named after the mage and first recorded victim of the phenomena, Darynka Leshova, **The Curse of the Staircase** (or **Darynka's Staircase**) is a predatory, otherworldly magical anomaly and cursed object. It actively hunts, using its bizarre physical manifestations to lure sentient beings into spreading its unknown plans across the Old Continent.

Darynka´s Staircase	
Details	
Element(s)	Unknown (probably some form of Chasm)
Type	Magical anomaly
User(s)	Darynka Leshova (first victim)

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Characteristics and Physiology

Darynka's Staircase is an anomaly that defies natural architecture. It initially manifests as an intricate, completely freestanding set of stairs sitting alone in the middle of a dense forest. There are no surrounding structures or ruins to explain its presence. Despite appearing to be made of ordinary wood, stone, or carpet, the Staircase is actually a living, feeling otherworldly entity.

It possesses an alien intelligence that fundamentally lacks an understanding of humanoid inflection or social cues. Its primary, predatory goal is to use humanoids as vessels to spread its unknown plans out of its territory.

To achieve this, the Staircase utilizes limited mental manipulation, projecting a hypnotic trance to lure curious humanoids to approach and climb it. The stairs are entirely harmless until physically touched. Once a sentient being makes physical contact, the Staircase "*marks*" them (or occasionally, a random person in the immediate vicinity).

The Faceless Lure and The Ersat

After marking a host through physical contact, the Staircase will project an entity that appears as a faceless humanoid to lure the victim away from their allies. Once isolated, the victim is incapacitated, and their body is hidden deep inside a tree hollow to establish a parasitic bond.

This bond channels the host's lifeforce into an ersat—a cursed mimic summoned from a dimension called by some as the Collection of Faces realm. The ersat takes on the host's exact appearance, attempting to escape the forest and infiltrate human society. If the ersat fails to escape the territory before its time limit expires, the original host will die.

Slaying

Handling a Darynka's Staircase requires immense willpower to resist its hypnotic lure, and the knowledge that every step taken escalates the danger exponentially.

Preparation & Equipment

A witcher must prepare thoroughly before stepping foot in a forest suspected of housing a Staircase. A high-grade silver sword is required, as standard steel will not harm the anomaly. The blade must be heavily coated in Cursed Oil. Because the Staircase relies on mental manipulation and the summoning of dangerous mimics, elixirs like Thunderbolt (for raw damage) and Petri's Philter (to boost Sign intensity) are recommended to deal with its summoned minions quickly.

Combat Strategy

The true danger of the Staircase lies in its ability to summon malevolence. By taking steps up a Darynka's Staircase, one inadvertently sends an invitation through the anomaly's territory, acting as a beacon for cosmic horrors.

1. **Step One**: Produces/summons an ersat from the reality known as the Collection of Faces.
2. **Step Two**: Produces/summons a grave-grazer from the frozen reality of the Great Old One, Nth-Ar.
3. **Step Three**: Produces/summons a ''*karnyx*'' bound to the Outer God, ''Zach'riel''. The gelatinous mass embeds itself in the surrounding foliage, perfectly mimicking the voices of the climber's dead loved ones, begging them to keep walking up the stairs.
4. **Step Four**: Produces/summons a ''*k'thuum*'' from the shadowy dimension of ''Th-Shath''. All natural light within a hundred yards of the stairs is instantly snuffed out, and a low-frequency hum begins to induce severe dread and nausea in anyone nearby.
5. **Step Five**: Produces/summons a highly toxic ''*oth'raxi*'' from the "laboratories" of the Plaguelord, ''Stalnitherath''. The serpentine entity begins to rapidly cultivate aggressive, alien fungal spores that decay the surrounding forest ecosystem in seconds.
6. **Step Six**: Produces/Summons a swarm of ''*fire vampires*'' from the court of ''Cthugha''. The charred orbs ignite the canopy above in cold, eldritch flames that burn souls rather than wood, sealing off any aerial escape.

7. **Step Seven**: Produces/Summons an ''albaonafh (Noiseless Hound)'' from the hunting grounds of ''Petohtalrayn''. The beast phases through the dimensional barrier at the bottom of the stairs, standing on its hind legs to physically block the climber from retreating down the steps.
8. **Step Eight**: Produces/summons a shapeshifting ''*servitor of the Outer Gods*''. Reacting to the escalating dimensional tear, this high-echelon attendant arrives to prepare the climber for their master, taking the physical form of the climber's absolute greatest fear.
9. **Step Nine**: The threshold event. The physical reality of the world begins to melt away. The climber is hit with the direct, localized telepathic weight of ''Um'Hrdaph'Na (The Master Sin)''. Their moral compass is instantly shattered, and gravity begins to reverse as the geometry of the Desolate Dimension bleeds into the sky.
10. **Step Ten**: The climber vanishes completely, transported into another dimension. (This is how the mage Darynka Leshova became the first recorded victim, leading to his eventual escape decades later through Darynka's Door).

A witcher must absolutely avoid climbing the stairs. The objective is to destroy the physical structure of the stairs themselves or sever its parasitic bond. If the witcher locates the tree hollow and successfully extracts the host's body, the parasitic bond is broken. Deprived of the host's lifeforce, the ersat will instantly drop its human disguise, transforming into a massive, bestial horror—a rotting humanoid with elk-like features (similar to, but distinct from, a leshen).

Aftermath

Once the physical structure of the Staircase is destroyed and its summoned minions slain, the anomaly's grip on the area dissipates. However, the exact spatial coordinates should be recorded, as the lingering dimensional thinning may attract other curses.

Immunities

- **Steel**: Standard weaponry has no effect on the cosmic structure of the stairs.
- **Axii**: As an alien intelligence, it cannot be reasoned with or controlled.

Weaknesses

- **Silver**: Despite being made of terrestrial materials, striking the Staircase with a silver blade causes the material to burn, smoke, and sizzle. This causes the Staircase to telepathically roar in pain, proving that silver is highly lethal to it.
- **Cursed Oil**: As a cursed entity, the physical material of the Staircase is highly susceptible to Cursed Oil. The oil disrupts the energies tying the object to the material plane, drastically weakening it.

Monster Lore & Behaviors

Habitat

The Staircase prefers large, ancient wooded areas and deep forests, usually around older, untouched growths. They have been notoriously spotted in the primeval groves of Brokilon.

Trans-Dimensional Trap

While it shares its name with Darynka's Door, the Staircase is distinctly different because it is ''*predatory*''. Where the Door is a neutral, rule-bound hazard, the Staircase actively wants you to touch it. It uses its hostages to power its mimics, putting innocent lives on a ticking clock.

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